



Senator Harry Reid

A Report to Seniors in Nevada

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Ensuring Seniors' Health and Security

In this time of an ongoing war on terrorism and a war in Iraq, the theme of securing our future, our homeland and our hometowns is ever present. Securing America's future requires us to consider more than our national and homeland security. Maintaining a healthy and secure America requires us to make sure that all Americans are healthy and secure.

Ensuring senior citizens remain healthy and secure is one of my top priorities. The cost of prescription drugs is skyrocketing. Double-digit increases in prescription drug spending are imposing a heavy financial burden on Medicare beneficiaries. The problem is expected to grow even worse since fewer employees are providing retiree health benefits and Medicare+Choice plans are scaling back their drug coverage.

In his State of the Union Address, President Bush announced a plan that would provide a drug benefit only to Medicare beneficiaries who are willing to abandon traditional Medicare. The President wants to push senior citizens into HMOs and other private insurance plans. Seniors in Nevada already have the option of enrolling in a private health plan through the Medicare+Choice program, but 81 percent of Nevada beneficiaries have chosen not to enroll in a private plan. Under the President's proposal, working Nevadans would have no guarantee that traditional Medicare will be there for them when they retire.

Nevada's seniors expect and deserve a Medicare drug benefit this year. A prescription drug benefit must be comprehensive, affordable, reliable and available to all Medicare beneficiaries.

On the first day of the 108th Congress, I, along with my Democratic colleagues, introduced the

Prescription Drug Benefit and Cost Containment Act, which would establish a comprehensive drug benefit for all Medicare beneficiaries for a \$25 monthly premium. There would be no deductible, reasonable cost sharing, and no gaps in coverage. Additional assistance would be provided to low-income beneficiaries. I will continue to press for quick



Janice Ayers presents Senator Harry Reid with an award for his continuous support for the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program.

passage of a comprehensive, affordable and reliable prescription drug benefit for all Medicare beneficiaries.

As prescription drugs are becoming more expensive, Social Security is dwindling. President Bush also proposed to privatize Social Security in his State of the Union Address. Giving workers private retirement accounts means taking money away from the Social Security program today that older workers have been depending on and contributing to as long as they have been working. Without Social Security contributions from younger workers, current Social Security beneficiaries must accept a cut

in their benefits if older workers are to receive even a fraction of the benefits they have been expecting their whole lives.

We need to protect Social Security for the 287,000 Nevadans who currently receive benefits. Under a privatized system, many seniors could lose their retirement security due to an inevitable downturn in the stock market. The sudden collapse of corporations like Enron and WorldCom illustrates the dangers of forcing workers to depend too heavily on private accounts for retirement savings. We need to preserve Social Security for future generations, but privatization schemes that would cause deep cuts in benefits, or force seniors to choose between delayed retirements and a huge drop in their standard of living are not the answers to Social Security's problems.

While these proposals seem alarming, I want Nevada's seniors to know that I am working in Washington, D.C. everyday to help them. I am committed to help protect seniors from being forced to pay outrageous amounts for prescription drugs while ensuring that the money they rely on at retirement does not quickly diminish. For years I have worked with my Senate colleagues to pass legislation that will help seniors and I will continue to do so until America's seniors can afford to stay healthy and ensure their retirements are secure.

Reid Calls Nevadans to Unite in Support of Our Troops in Iraq

Earlier this month, the men and women of our armed forces, with the help of British and Australian soldiers, began military operations to disarm Saddam Hussein and remove his brutal regime from power. This operation is not without risk, but the American military is the best fighting force ever assembled and I am confident our troops will bring about a decisive victory. We pray for their safety and wish them a speedy return to their families and friends. We also stand united with our Commander-in-Chief, as he leads the nation through this difficult period. I will do everything in my power to ensure the Congress fully funds and supports the needs of our troops. We must also continue with our diplomatic efforts in assembling a coalition to share in the burden of post-war reconstruction and development.

We stand united, with one voice, in supporting our troops and in swiftly defeating Saddam Hussein. We must remain vigilant here at home to guard against the possibility of terrorist reprisals, but I am confident that peaceful times lie ahead. Certainly, peace and freedom lie on the horizon for the Iraqi people.

KEEPING IN TOUCH



Please feel free to contact me or my staff offices with questions or concerns you might have regarding these or any other issues. We value your input and stand ready to work with you.

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